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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls

Statement presented by Global Alliance for Women's Health, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1

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Statement

The emerging problem of diabetes is a current and growing challenge for the "advancement and empowerment of women and girls." Based on the Platform for Action Strategic objective C.4 para.109.(d), which looks at the "...the impact of gender and age inequalities, especially with respect to chronic and non-communicable diseases...," we are asking the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to recognize diabetes as a chronic disease that currently challenges the "advancement and empowerment of women and girls."

Over the past 20 years, diabetes has been growing into a global epidemic both in developed and developing countries, with women being disproportionately at risk. The projections for diabetes prevalence are staggering.

- Currently, about 194 million people have diabetes worldwide, and this number is expected to grow to 333 million by 2025.[1]
- In developing countries, there is a projected 170% increase in diabetes prevalence, and in developed countries, there is an expected 42% increase.[2]
- This explosion of diabetes acutely affects women; in 1995, 73 million women had diabetes as compared with 62 million men, worldwide.[3] If this disparity continues, 180 million women will have diabetes by 2025.
- In developed countries, people without diabetes have shown a decrease in heart disease, and even men with diabetes have shown a 13% decrease in heart disease. However, women with diabetes have actually seen a 23% increase in cardiovascular disease.[4]

Moreover, women, as the primary caregivers, will have the burden of caring for those suffering from diabetes and its complications. Along with heart disease, these complications can include circulatory problems such as stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and amputation.

With this in mind, GAWH has launched the advocacy campaign: "Women and the Emerging Diabetes Epidemic." As part of this campaign, the GAWH is initiating a network of worldwide NGOs to disseminate information on the epidemic of diabetes.

GAWH is calling on the United Nations, the World Health Organization, UNFPA and UNDP to recognize diabetes as an emerging epidemic and to develop forward-looking policies that not only address this growing health crisis but also take on the epidemic of diabetes from a gender perspective.

The Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women underscored the idea of gender equality into the dialogue of women's issues. As we assess and appraise the Platform for Action, the Global Alliance for Women's Health urges the Commission on the Status Women to recognize that without a special focus on the health needs of women, the "advancement and empowerment of women and girls" is seriously undermined. GAWH believes that with a proactive gender-focused approach and the cooperation of the international community, the growing epidemic of diabetes can be quelled.

[1] http://www.idf.org/home/index.cfm?printpage=1&node=264
[2] http://www.idf.org/home/index.cfm?node=37
[3] http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2002/WHO_NMH_02.01.pdf
[4] http://www.idf.org/home/index.cfm?node=37